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ABSTRACT

Results of a survey are presented concerning the status of social studies methods courses at undergraduate institutions in Arkansas. There are 16 colleges which provide teaching certificates at the secondary level in Arkansas; all include the social studies as one of their certification areas. All 16 responded to the author's questionnaire. It was found that 11 of the 16 institutions offer an undergraduate secondary social studies methods course. A variety of textbooks is used, as well as materials from social studies projects, simulations and games, case studies, and audiovisual materials. Approximately 70% of the courses make use of materials from the National Council for the Social Studies, and two-thirds of the courses incorporate materials from the Arkansas Council for the Social Studies. An estimated 60% of the students in programs leading toward initial certification in the social studies are supervised in practice teaching by the same person who taught them social studies methods. Course syllabi reveal striking differences in the way the methods courses are organized. The conclusion is that there is a need for communication among social studies methods instructors in Arkansas. Information should be shared on the merits of different textbooks, ways to integrate field-based components into the regular courses, and the need to develop competency-based courses. (AV)

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The Status of the Secondary Social Studies Methods Course in Arkansas

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The Status of the Secondary Social Studies Methods Course in Arkansas

I. INTRODUCTION

There are sixteen institutions of higher education in Arkansas, all NCATE-accredited, which offer programs leading to certification to teach at the secondary level. All sixteen institutions include the social studies as one of their certification areas. The state, in its Laws and Regulations Governing the Certification of Teachers, Administrators, and Supervisors (1977), calls for, among other requirements, a "study of teaching." This requirement typically translates into either a "general methods" course or "special methods" courses for each secondary teaching field (or in some cases both types of courses).[1]

Within the state there is little if any interaction or communication among instructors of these special methods courses. Thus there is no sense of commonalities or of what is unique to each institution; no access

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[1]This paper relates only to those seeking initial certification in the social studies. Students already certified in another field can add social studies certification with no additional course work in professional education (i.e., no special methods course) and a minimal 24 semester hours of social studies. In a 1976 survey Dr. Jerry Long discovered that over one-half of Arkansas' 2000 social studies teachers were originally certified in another field. (letter from Jerry Long, September 16, 1979)

to fresh ideas and resources; no notion of the overall contours of the field.

In my experience the social studies methods course serves as a key mediator between the twenty-four to forty-eight or more semester hours of social science and history that students certifying in the area take and the way in which they themselves teach social studies in the secondary schools. I have made contact with the instructors responsible for undergraduate, preservice social studies methods instruction at the state's colleges and universities in order to determine the status of such instruction. A two-page questionnaire was mailed to each Chief Institutional Representative of the Arkansas Association of Colleges for Teacher Education for forwarding to the appropriate instructor. Follow up letters were mailed. All sixteen institutions eventually responded. The results of this study should provide educators in Arkansas and the mid-South a fuller understanding of the nature of the secondary social studies methods course at the undergraduate level.

II. QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES

Eleven of the sixteen institutions (69%) responded that they offer an undergraduate secondary social studies methods course. These eleven institutions have prepared between 75% and 80% of the secondary teachers in Arkansas during the past several years. Five schools offer the course each semester, five offer it once a year, and one offers it on demand (as a one hour elective). Five of the courses have maintained an average enrollment of one to ten during the past three years; six have maintained an average enrollment of eleven to twenty.

The schools not offering such a course tended--with one exception--to be those preparing the fewest secondary teachers. These five schools were

asked to indicate what experiences substitute for the social studies methods course. The typical response was that social studies students within the general methods course are provided some experiences particular to their teaching field. For example, one instructor said, "It is part of a general methods course which is taught in self-instructional units and one of these is in the area of concentration. We hope to innugurate a separate course soon." Another instructor wrote, "Majors in this field do have a general methods course in which they do reading in and become familiar with publications in the field."

When asked if the social studies methods course included a "field-based component," three of the eleven instructors responded affirmatively. One of those wrote that the course was part of the practice teaching block, and one wrote that four hours of "observation and participation" in area public schools under selected secondary school teachers was included.

When asked to characterize their course according to its degree of being "competency based," one instructor marked "highly competency based," seven marked "somewhat competency based," (one added, "but moving toward highly competency based"), and three marked "developed on other than a competency base."

Instructors were asked what texts were used for the course. As might be expected, there was little convergence of choice. Ten different texts were listed. Several courses used more than one text. The only ones listed by more than one institution were Leonard Kenworthy's Guide to Social Studies Teaching, Ehman, Mehlinger, and Patrick's Toward Effective Instruction in Secondary Social Studies, and Leonard Clark's Teaching Social Studies in Secondary Schools: A Handbook—each found in three schools. The other texts mentioned were Wesley and Wronski's Teaching Secondary Social Studies

in a World Society, Richard Phillips' Teaching for Thinking in High School Social Studies, the Association of Teachers of Social Studies in the City of New York, A Handbook for the Teaching of Social Studies, Callahan's Successful Teaching in Secondary Schools (along with Brown, Adams, and Adams' How to Read the Social Sciences), Edwin Fenton's Teaching the New Social Studies in Secondary Schools (used in a general methods course), Jerome Bruner's The Process of Education, and David Kellum's The Social Studies (along with Jack Fraenkel's Helping Students Think and Value).

Several instructors indicated that they used a great variety of materials in addition to the textbook, such as materials from the social studies projects, simulations and games, case studies, audio-visual materials, and resource materials of their own devising.

Eight of the eleven schools offering the special methods course responded affirmatively to the question, "Does the course make use of materials from, or recommend membership in, the National Council for the Social Studies?" One respondent at a school offering only the general methods course also marked "yes" on this question. It was calculated that approximately 70% of those preparing to certify in the social studies were exposed to the materials of benefits of participation in this teaching field's professional organization.

Instructors were asked as well, "Does the course make use of materials from, or recommend membership in, the Arkansas Council for the Social Studies?" In response two of the nine instructors who had marked "yes" on the question relating to the National Council for the Social Studies marked "no" (One added, "not in the past, but will begin to push it more from now on.") One instructor who had marked "yes" to the NCSS question qualified his "yes" regarding the ACSS with "some", and another added the

comment, "not much material from ACSS." It was calculated that roughly two-thirds of those preparing to certify in the social studies were exposed to the state council.

Instructors were asked if the person who teaches the course also supervises social studies majors in their student teaching. Six of the eleven instructors marked "yes" (54%), five marked "no" (45%). One of the schools not offering the special methods course had the social studies students meet with their advisor once a week for special methods as part of the general methods course. That advisor then supervises their student teaching. So an estimated 60% of those in programs leading toward initial certification in the social studies are supervised by the same person who taught them social studies methods. Several instructors added comments at this point, which served to suggest that a variety of arrangements, both formal and informal, were practiced on this question. One instructor noted that because of the distances involved in traveling to supervise, supervision was assigned on the basis of geographic location rather than subject matter.

Several instructors provided copies of their syllabi or course outlines. Striking differences appeared in the ways in which instructors organized their methods course. In Appendix A some of these materials have been condensed and reproduced.

III. IMPLICATIONS OF THE DATA

The overall picture that emerges from this survey is a mixed one at best. Some instructors appear highly satisfied with the existing arrangements, others are calling for assistance and mutual support. Given the opportunity to add final observations or comments, several replied.

One wrote, "we only offer a one-hour course. The students produce mini-lessons in the various areas of the social studies. They seem to find it quite helpful . . . I have taught in the public schools myself and they seem to appreciate that." Another wrote, "The course seems to be meaningful for students. It is a practical course with emphasis on developing specific skills of teaching social studies." On the other hand an instructor noted that his course was "deeply in need of a field-based component. Different text is necessary. Definite need for additional materials such as NCSS and ACSS. Library resources need upgrading. Lack of time by the instructor to spend more time in the public schools to improve his own skills and make the course more relevant to what is presently taking place in the public schools." And another apologized for "such a limited response to your survey but we have only begun our efforts in this area. Any assistance you might be able to give would be most appreciated."

Any generalizations about the nature of the social studies methods course within Arkansas must be tempered by the fact that approximately one half of the 2000 social studies teachers in the state obtained social studies certification as a second teaching field and therefore have not been required to take a social studies methods course. And even of those certifying initially in the social studies, roughly 20 to 25% enroll in programs which offer only a general methods course.[2] If it is understood that the social

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[2]It seems clear that by and large smaller institutions in the state do not have the resources to offer special methods courses for the different teaching fields. In a small, relatively poor state such as Arkansas it may be as unreasonable to expect sixteen carefully articulated, adequately staffed professional programs as it would be to expect sixteen medical schools. But the question, are there too many teacher education programs, is a political issue which has to be addressed elsewhere.

studies methods course is a key component in a teacher's preparation, then the probable conclusion that less than 40% of those teaching social studies in the state have taken such a course must be a cause for concern.

At present social studies methods instructors within the state lack an obvious means by which they can share ideas and concerns. For example, current educational literature contains many admonitions against strictly classroom instruction. The three instructors in the state whose courses include a field-based component should be able to inform the others how that component is integrated with the rest of the course and how useful it has proven to be. Similarly, there should be a forum for discussion over the appropriateness and costs of developing a "competency-based" course, considering the variety of approaches indicated in the survey. Further, with so many methods texts on the market, instructors need to hear from one another on the relative merits of Kenworthy, Clark, Fraenkel, and other authors. Instructors should be aware of how individuals are using NCSS and ACSS materials as well as locally produced materials.

Most instructors teach as they have been taught, with little sense of alternatives. The responses to the survey suggest that an informal network of interested social studies educators would be a useful means of sharing the ideas and problems each individual in his/her isolation deals with. The first step is understanding who we are and the nature of the educational situation. This paper is offered as a step in that direction. The second step is a willingness to open up the channels of communication so that social studies methods instructors can share with and borrow from a statewide group of similarly situated individuals. The goal is to provide a methods course or set of experiences which will be instrumental in moving people from their roles as students to roles as competent and effective social studies educators.

APPENDIX A

SOCIAL STUDIES METHODS COURSES ORGANIZED BY TOPICS

SOCIAL STUDIES METHODS COURSES ORGANIZED BY OBJECTIVES

SOCIAL STUDIES METHODS COURSES ORGANIZED BY TOPICS

EXAMPLE A

1. Theories of Teaching
2. Teaching objectives
3. Lesson plans
4. Levels of Questions
5. Simple research projects
6. Ease Index
7. General Education
8. Values Clarification
9. Social Studies
10. Interaction Analysis
11. Evaluation Form
12. Sociometric tests
13. Education for a Global Society
14. Discipline

EXAMPLE B

1. Introduction: Philosophy and Assumptions
2. The Field of the Social Studies and Me
3. Bases for Teaching the Social Studies: Curriculum
4. Methods: Questioning Skills
5. Methods: Games, Simulations, Role Playing
6. Inquiry: Models and Examples
7. Curriculum Materials and Projects: The "New" Social Studies
8. Curriculum Materials and Projects: Harvard Project as a Case Study
9. Planning Social Studies Instruction
10. Planning: Units
11. Values Education: Models and Examples
12. Evaluation and Grading
13. Community Education
14. Instructional Headaches

EXAMPLE C

I. Teaching and the problem of method in teaching Social Studies
   - A. Philosophy in the S.S.
   - B. Characteristics of . . . pupils
   - C. The problem of method

II. Basic methodological considerations
   - A. Learning more about students
   - B. Discipline
   - C. Motivation
   - D. Teaching skills in the S.S.
   - E. Teaching understanding
   - F. Teaching attitudes . . .
   - G. Teaching controversial issues

III. Providing for individual differences
   - A. Individualizing instruction
   - B. Teaching the academically talented
   - C. Teaching poor achievers
   - D. Teaching the children of the poor
   - E. Teaching creatively

IV. Methods and Techniques
   - A. Inquiry
   - B. Role playing
   - C. Questioning techniques
   - D. Lecture
   - E. Discussion
   - F. Small group work
   - G. Homework
   - H. Teaching study skills

V. Teaching the disciplines
   - A. Making History live
   - B. Structure of Geography
   - C. Political Science & Citizenship Ed.
   - D. Economics

VI. Behavioral Sciences in the curr.
VII. Current events
VIII. Games & simulations in the S.S.
IX. Free & inexpensive materials . . .

SOCIAL STUDIES METHODS COURSES ORGANIZED BY OBJECTIVES

EXAMPLE A

Upon completion of this course students should be able to:

1. Enumerate some characteristics of secondary and middle school children as they relate to teaching
2. Employ methods of discipline and control
3. Demonstrate skills in teaching the social sciences
4. Write objectives
5. Prepare teaching units and lesson plans
6. Demonstrate methods and techniques of teaching social science
7. Construct instruments for measuring, testing, and evaluating students
8. Identify and use effectively tools and materials of instruction

EXAMPLE B

THE STUDENT WILL:

1.0 Demonstrate proficiency in planning instruction for a course in secondary school social studies.

1.1 Distinguish between the social sciences and the social studies.

1.2 Identify the disciplines in the social science and define them in terms of domain and methodologies.

1.3 Describe the pattern of social studies offerings in Arkansas secondary schools.

1.4 Describe the characteristics of, and assess the "new social studies."

. . . .

1.14 Demonstrate proficiency in using the major finding and evaluative tools in planning a course in social studies.

2.0 Demonstrate proficiency in implementing instruction in a course in secondary school social studies.

2.1 Define "instruction" and "learning."

2.2 Formulate a criteria by which to assess instructional performance.

. . . .

2.10 Utilize post-instructional analysis to modify instructional objectives and teaching strategy.

2.11 Demonstrate proficiency in evaluating lesson plans and instructional strategy and technique.

3.0 Demonstrate proficiency in evaluating student performance in a course in secondary school social studies.

4.0 Demonstrate knowledge, competencies and attitudes essential to professional growth as a secondary school social studies teacher.

4.1 Assess his personal and professional goals in relationship to opportunities for personal and professional achievement in secondary school teaching.

. . .

4.9 Formulate strategies for continued professional growth.

EXAMPLE C

The student will

A. construct cognitive and affective course goals.

B. collect and interpret historical data

C. construct lesson plans.

D. schedule and organize classroom situations.

E. construct objective and essay tests.

F. read actively, identify significant points, and formulate searching questions.

G. read a wide variety of material which provides real-life and factual descriptions of an era.

H. construct questions for inductive teaching.

I. interpret charts, tables, graphs, and maps.

J. communicate ideas clearly and concisely.

K. facilitate several kinds of special activities (games, art projects, audio visuals, debates, oral presentations, and book reviews).